United Nations A/C.5/58/SR.24

General Assembly
Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
9 December 2003

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 24th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 3 December 2003, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Kmoníček ..... (Czech Republic)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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03-63830 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 59: Strengthening of the United Nations system (*continued*) (A/58/600 and A/58/610)

1. **Mr. Kelapile** (Botswana), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that the Group would continue to support the efforts of the Secretary-General to reform and strengthen the Organization. It had always been in the forefront of efforts to improve the functioning of the United Nations system whenever such improvements were needed. The Organization's decision-making process must remain transparent and allow full representation of all Member States, without exception and on an equal basis. That was especially important in connection with decisions which could lead to changes in planning, budgeting, monitoring and the evaluation cycle.

2. The African Group had paid close attention to the proposals of the Secretary-General, the observations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the Joint Inspection Unit and the comments of the members of the Fifth Committee. It believed that there was a need for a clear diagnosis of the shortcomings of the current planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation process in order to propose improvements, some or all of which must then be approved. Such a diagnosis should ensure that there was no confusion about where the shortcomings lay in order to avoid changing elements of the current process without any meaningful results.

3. The Organization must have a strategic and forward-looking outlook. The internationally agreed goals contained in the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of major international conferences provided a broad vision for the Organization and the international community. Most, if not all, of those goals covered a long period. The Organization must therefore have a plan which would establish realistic objectives to achieve those goals, and the Member States had an essential role to play in formulating it and setting priorities. The plan should therefore continue to constitute the Organization's principal policy directive.

4. The African Group had noted the view of the Advisory Committee, in paragraph 7 of its report (A/58/610), that it could not judge whether the mock-up presented in the report of the Secretary-General (A/58/600) was shorter or more strategic than the current medium-term plan. The Group looked forward to receiving the Secretariat's response to the comments in paragraphs 7 and 8 of the Advisory Committee's report, including mock-ups for programmes that were more sophisticated and complex and an analysis of the problems of the current budgetary process and of their impact on the allocation of resources according to the priorities set out in the medium-term plan and the budget outline. It also hoped that the Secretariat would address the comments in paragraph 6 of the Advisory Committee's report regarding the timing of consideration of the biennial programme plan and the budget outline, and give further details about the plan's ability to reflect new mandates, the sequence of steps in the preparation and approval of the plan and ways to avoid delays.

5. The African Group was composed of small delegations with limited capacity, so it was anxious to avoid duplication in the work of the intergovernmental bodies involved in the planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation process. Priority setting was, and should remain, the prerogative of the Member States. Moreover, it was the process of reviewing the budget, rather than the role of the intergovernmental bodies and Member States in that process, that required attention.

6. The Committee for Programme and Coordination must play an active role in reviewing the programming aspects of the budget. The Fifth Committee should not duplicate that review, as it was not in a position to provide an opinion. The African Group fully supported efforts to improve and enhance the work of the intergovernmental bodies involved in the monitoring and evaluation of programmes. It had noted the concern expressed by the Advisory Committee, in paragraph 9 of its report, that the note of the Secretary-General had failed to provide clarification on the proposed measures to improve the current process of programme planning, monitoring and evaluation arrangements, and looked forward to a response from the Secretariat.

7. The Member States must receive clear proposals, including comprehensive information on a modified biennial programme performance report, improvements to the format and timing of evaluation reports and a clear definition of the roles of the entities that were or would be involved in programme planning, monitoring and evaluation.

8. The Advisory Committee, in paragraph 10 of its report, had stated that it was uncertain how much information it or the Member States would receive on outputs and resource requirements if the General Assembly proceeded with the recommendations in paragraph 5 of the Secretary-General's report. Member States must continue to receive enough information to take informed decisions during the budget negotiations.

9. The African Group recognized that the Secretariat had not had very much time to provide comprehensive answers to the questions raised by the Member States and the Advisory Committee and that the Advisory Committee itself had had little time for discussion. It appreciated the efforts which had been made so far to provide information and asked for adequate time to be allocated to informal consultations on such an important issue.

10. **Mr. Martini** (Italy), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, the associated countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, and, in addition, Iceland and Liechtenstein, commended the Secretariat for providing mock-ups for the proposed strategic framework, which gave a first indication of what the new format would look like, although that format would be further refined over time.

11. The intergovernmental process and documentation for planning and budgeting must be streamlined and rationalized. He agreed that a biennial programme plan, as proposed in the mock-ups, would provide an opportunity to develop more concrete and specific expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement, as the Advisory Committee had recommended. He also agreed that the Secretary-General's proposal that a two-part strategic framework, composed of a biennial programme plan and a budget outline, should be established was a modest step towards more informed decision-making in the Fifth Committee which would enable it ultimately to match programming and priority setting to resource implications more effectively.

12. He was grateful that the Advisory Committee had reacted swiftly to the request of the Fifth Committee for its first impressions on the mock-ups provided by the Secretariat, and agreed with the Advisory Committee that the decision to replace the current four-year medium-term plan by a biennial programme plan was first and foremost a policy decision. The Advisory Committee's questions regarding the mock-ups were valid, however, and he accepted its intention to make further comments and recommendations when it took up the plan and outline following the acceptance by the General Assembly of the proposals in paragraph 5 of the note by the Secretary-General (A/58/600).

13. With one General Assembly resolution, three reports of the Secretary General, one report of the Joint Inspection Unit and one report of the Advisory Committee, the Fifth Committee had no further need for material on which to base its decision on reform of the planning and budgeting process.

14. The final recommendation in the report of the Advisory Committee stated that, since the changes now being proposed were minimal, there would be only minimal consequential amendments to the relevant financial and planning regulations. For that reason, if the members of the Fifth Committee worked together, they would be able to generate important first results in advancing budgetary reform before the end of the main part of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

15. **Ms. Arce de Gabay** (Peru), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that the Group shared the view that the reforms which the Secretary-General was currently proposing did not go as far as they had expected. However, that was no reason to oppose them. The fact that the Advisory Committee considered those proposals to be minimal reinforced that impression. Time was short, so the Committee must take a decision on the matter during the main part of the fifty-eighth session so that the Secretariat could prepare the medium-term plan in time for the Committee for Programme and Coordination to consider it in 2004.

16. The Rio Group saw no reason not to agree to the minor proposed changes to the medium-term plan, the budget outline and the budget cycle, since they would advance the use of results-based budgeting in the Organization.

17. **Mr. Farid** (Saudi Arabia) said that his delegation fully supported the efforts of the Secretary-General to reform the Organization. However, he agreed with the African Group that the Secretariat must clarify certain matters, particularly those which the Advisory Committee had raised in paragraphs 6 to 10 of its report (A/58/610).

18. **Mr. Elkhuizen** (Netherlands) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union and supported the reform efforts of the Secretary-General. If the Committee did not take a decision on budget reform during the main part of the fifty-eighth session, it would not have an opportunity to return to the matter for four years. That was unacceptable.

19. **Ms. Stanley** (Ireland) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union and supported the modest reform proposals of the Secretary-General, which should be acted on during the main part of the fifty-eighth session.

20. **Mr. Tootoonchian** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the important matter before the Committee deserved thorough analysis and review. The Member States had had fruitful discussions at the formal and informal meetings of the Committee. They and the Advisory Committee must be given comprehensive information, despite the limited time available, so that the proposed changes could be given due consideration. As the African Group had pointed out, the Advisory Committee had asked for further clarification.

21. The aim was to improve the programming and budgetary process by making changes where changes were needed. Whether those changes were large or small, they must be considered on the basis of their merit, rationale, impact and other technical considerations, and not simply for their own sake. The documentation provided and the discussions held over the previous year had deepened the Committee's understanding of the reform objectives. It must explore how to make the Organization more accountable and efficient, so that it could implement the mandates established by its Member States. His delegation welcomed the incorporation of monitoring and evaluation into the programming and budget process. It was important to strengthen the role of the Committee for Programme and Coordination without undermining the mandates of that intergovernmental body in other areas.

22. **Mr. Drofenik** (Austria) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union and pointed out that many delegations had complained in the past that the budgetary process absorbed a great deal of energy and resources. The Secretary-General, to his credit, had put forward proposals for reform, offering a window of opportunity which must not be wasted.

23. **Mr. Nesser** (Sweden) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union and supported the reforms proposed by the Secretary-General. Time was of the essence, and the Committee should take a decision on those reforms at once.

24. **Mr. Honningstad** (Norway) said he felt that the Fifth Committee was faced with a historic opportunity to advance reform of the budgetary process. Missing that opportunity would have a substantial effect on all the other aspects of reform in the Organization. The budget reform, while not far-reaching, was a cornerstone of reform in general. It would make the United Nations more goal-oriented and help the Member States to implement the mandates established in the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals and by the major international conferences over the past 10 years.

25. He had been surprised that some members of the Committee continued to have doubts and questions about the proposed reforms. It was natural for them to have questions, but the matter of reform had been documented more thoroughly than any other issue that he could remember from his time at the United Nations. Moreover, none of the documents which the Committee had seen had expressed support for the current budget procedure or the current medium-term plan. If the Committee failed to act now, a minimum of four years would go by before it was able to address the matter again.

26. Turning to the report of the Advisory Committee (A/58/610), he pointed out that the mock-ups provided by the Secretariat were merely an illustration, not a goal in themselves. As the reform process moved forward and as results-based budgeting became widespread, the budget documents would become clearer even than the mock-ups had supposed.

27. The Organization needed reform and the Fifth Committee was in a position to advance it. It must not let an opportunity to act slip away.

28. **Ms. Galvez** (United Kingdom) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European

Union and wished to add its own expression of support for the reforms proposed by the Secretary-General to streamline the budgeting and planning process and thus create a clear link between resources and programmes. It was grateful for the documentation which the Secretariat had provided and considered it sufficient to allow the Committee to reach a sensible decision on the matter during the current session of the General Assembly. If the Committee acted during the current session, it would improve the Organization's ability to deliver results in accordance with its priorities.

29. **Ms. Pehrman** (Finland) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union and emphasized that timing was vital in the consideration of the budget reform proposed by the Secretary-General. The Committee should lose no time in taking action.

30. **Mr. Bittner** (Germany) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union. It was keenly aware that the Organization had been considering budget reform proposals for over one and a half years. All of the members of the Committee agreed that the current process was cumbersome and costly and did not serve the interests of smaller Member States. Action should be taken without delay because a new budget cycle was beginning.

31. **Mr. Zaluar** (Brazil) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Peru on behalf of the Rio Group. It had no objection to the current reform proposals, which it would consider approving at an early date. In order to address whatever doubts remained on the issue, particularly those expressed in the report of the Advisory Committee regarding the timing and length of the plan, matching the allocation of resources with priorities, performance reports and the details regarding outputs and resource requirements which would be provided, he suggested that the Secretariat should produce supplementary information as a synthetic, informal, conference room paper. However, his delegation would follow the lead given by the Chairman in reaching a consensus on the matter in the Committee.

32. **Mr. Adán Carmona** (Spain) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union. It found it difficult to understand the criticism which the proposals of the Secretary-General had attracted, since they were only a first step and served the aims of achieving programme goals. The current budgeting process produced incremental change from year to year without taking account of overall goals. The proposed steps were an extraordinary advance in terms of transparency. Efforts should therefore be united to translate them into action as rapidly as possible.

33. **Mr. Poinsot** (France) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union. The reform of budgetary procedure and planning occupied a central place in the overall reform effort in the Organization. The proposals of the Secretary-General would streamline budgetary and financial procedures and the work of the Committee. It considered that the Committee had all the documentation it needed to adopt a position on the matter and that the proposals of the Secretary-General were modest in scale but significant in their symbolism. The Committee should take action on them during the current session.

34. **Mr. Zevelakis** (Greece) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union. It fully supported the reforms proposed by the Secretary-General and looked forward to acting on the proposals swiftly.

35. **Mr. Kafka** (Czech Republic) endorsed the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union. He stressed that the timing of the decision on the proposed reforms was crucial if the reforms were to have a real impact.

36. **Mr. Roa Arboleda** (Colombia) endorsed the statement made by the representative of Peru on behalf of the Rio Group. Although the Secretary-General's proposals were simpler than expected and entailed minimal changes to current procedure, they should be adopted and implemented immediately. A decision must be taken during the current session so that the Secretariat could draw up the medium-term plan in a timely manner and submit it for consideration to the Committee for Programme and Coordination at the beginning of 2004.

37. **Mr. Pulido León** (Venezuela) endorsed the statement made by the representative of Peru on behalf

of the Rio Group and expressed his full support for the Secretary-General's proposals. Although they were modest in scope, they could lend momentum to the overall reform of the Organization. He trusted that the process would be taken forward during the current session of the General Assembly and expressed the hope that any adjustments or refinements deemed necessary by Member States could be incorporated into the relevant proposals as appropriate.

38. **Mr. Myck** (Luxembourg) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union. He agreed that a decision must be taken during the current session so as to maintain the momentum of the reform process and prevent a further four-year delay in the consideration of the matter.

39. **Ms. Hutanová** (Slovakia) endorsed the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union. She fully supported the Secretary-General's proposals and urged all Member States to make a concerted effort to make the reforms a reality.

40. **Ms. Lock** (South Africa) said that her delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Botswana on behalf of the African Group and to reiterate its full support for the efforts of the Secretary-General to reform the United Nations. She commended the Secretariat for the prompt issuance of the relevant documentation and expressed her gratitude to the Advisory Committee for its advice. In that connection, she trusted that the Secretariat would provide responses to the questions ACABQ had raised so that the Committee could move forward with its negotiations. She said that no delegation was attempting to stall the reform process by delaying a decision on the issue in question and pointed out that the Committee's programme of work was not under discussion. She stood ready to begin negotiations and urged all Member States to consider the issue in a careful and constructive manner.

41. **Mr. Álvarez** (Chile) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Peru on behalf of the Rio Group. The proposals of the Secretary-General contained in document A/58/600 were valid and he expressed the hope that Member States would be able to reach agreement on them and take a decision that would enable the reform process to move forward.

42. **Mr. Ramos** (Portugal) endorsed the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union and suggested that the Committee should begin its informal consultations without delay in order to expedite matters. He agreed with the representative of Norway that the reform of the planning and budgeting process constituted an integral part of the overall reform of the Organization. The President of the General Assembly had proposed an ambitious draft decision on the reform and revitalization of the working methods of the Assembly which had garnered widespread support, but the deliberations of the Fifth Committee concerning the reform process had not been so straightforward. If the Secretary-General's modest proposals were not approved, the momentum gained by the General Assembly would be interrupted and the perception that the Fifth Committee was responsible for stalling and unravelling issues would be further reinforced. He therefore urged all Member States to proceed swiftly to adopt the proposals.

43. **Mr. Manczyk** (Poland) said that his delegation wished to associate itself fully with the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union. He supported the reform of the planning and budgeting process in spite of the modest nature of the Secretary-General's proposals and, in that respect, felt that timing was very important. He was confident that the Committee would be in a position to adopt a decision on the issue during the current session.

44. **Ms. Banhcke** (Denmark) said that she wished to stress the importance of taking the first step towards reforming the budgeting process as soon as possible.

45. **Mr. Onaner** (Turkey) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union. He reiterated the point that the proposals at issue were merely a first step towards the reform of the planning and budgeting process, not a definitive solution. To defer the issue would send an erroneous message about the budget reform and give the impression that the Fifth Committee did not support the prevailing trend towards reform within the United Nations as a whole. He also observed that the absence of the Chairperson of the Group of 77 and China at the current meeting was an important signal and, in that connection, he urged all Member States which were opposed to the process to review their positions.

46. **Ms. Goicochea** (Cuba) recalled that two requests had already been made for the publication of the documents under consideration in all official languages and pointed out that the Chairman had given his assurance that those requests would be honoured.

47. With regard to the mock ups, she said that all delegations agreed that it was in their interests to move forward with the reform process. However, when preparing such documents, the Secretariat should be informed about which format the Member States preferred and which data they wished to see included. The mock-ups currently before the Committee should have been drafted in a manner similar to those used to illustrate the effects of results-based budgeting techniques and should have covered large departments and sections of the Organization, such as the Department for Economic and Social Affairs or the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

48. Lastly, she wished to stress that, despite the criticisms levelled at it, the Fifth Committee had contributed in a significant manner to the work of the Organization in many areas, as evidenced by its role in the adoption of General Assembly resolution 41/213. She looked forward to hearing the Secretariat's responses to the questions posed by the representative of Botswana on behalf of the African Group.

49. **Ms. Budrauskaite** (Lithuania) said that her delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union in support of the Secretary-General's reform proposals. She stressed the importance of taking a decision on the issue during the main part of the current session of the General Assembly.

50. **Mr. Elnaggar** (Egypt) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Botswana on behalf of the African Group. However, given the way that the debate was unfolding, he felt duty bound to take the floor in a national capacity. His delegation had always supported the Secretary-General's efforts to reform and strengthen the United Nations and would continue to do so. The report of ACABQ (A/58/610) provided the Committee with technical advice and contained a number of specific requests and questions which required responses from the Secretariat before Member States could take a decision.

51. He endorsed the comments made by the representative of South Africa regarding the programme of work and added that, to his knowledge, neither the Chairman nor any delegation had made a formal request to postpone the adoption of a decision. He also agreed with the representative of Portugal that it might be better to discuss the proposals in informal consultations.

52. In conclusion, he stressed the importance of strengthening and reforming the Organization and the need for Member States to take a considered decision on the matter on the basis of clear information.

53. **Mr. Alarcón** (Costa Rica) endorsed the statement made by the representative of Peru on behalf of the Rio Group. He was grateful to the Secretariat and ACABQ for the information they had provided and trusted that responses to the questions that had been raised would be supplied as soon as possible. He emphasized the importance of the proposed measures in the area of planning and budgeting and, given the vital significance of the process for the Organization as a whole, he urged Member States to take steps towards adopting a decision as soon as possible.

54. **Mr. Bouheddou** (Algeria) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Botswana on behalf of the African Group. He stressed that he was in favour of the concept of reform as a whole, not just the budgetary aspects thereof. He observed that no delegations were opposed to taking a decision on the issue, but he felt that a number of the Secretary-General's proposals were purely symbolic and inappropriate to fill the gaps in the current planning and budgeting process identified in his original report on the strengthening of the United Nations (A/57/387 and Corr.1). He wondered how it was possible to support the reform process yet endorse a series of symbolic and cosmetic mini-reforms that undermined the concept of global change. He also questioned the wisdom of approving the Secretary-General's proposals simply because they were simple. There was a need for a genuine and global reform of the planning and budgeting process which addressed the shortcomings of the current system rather than attempting to cover them up.

55. **Mr. Herrera** (Mexico) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Peru on behalf of the Rio Group. Although the Secretary-General's proposals were modest in scope, they were nevertheless useful and

could pave the way for further, more far-reaching reforms. In that context, they should be approved.

56. **Mr. Vilums** (Latvia) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union. He fully supported the Secretary-General's proposals to improve the current process of planning and budgeting and expressed the hope that a positive and timely decision would be taken during the current session of the General Assembly.

57. **Mr. Kelapile** (Botswana), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that he wished to reiterate a number of points made in his previous statement. The reforms proposed by the Secretary-General were indeed modest, but they touched upon key instruments in the area of planning and budgeting. Traditionally, the Fifth Committee always requested as much information as possible before taking decisions and, in the present case, the African Group had simply asked for further clarification in respect of a number of queries raised in the report of ACABQ. It had not been the Group's intention to delay or oppose any decision.

58. He reaffirmed his full support for the Secretary-General's proposed reforms and expressed the hope that additional time would be allocated for the discussion of them in order to ensure a productive conclusion.

59. **Mr. Elji** (Syrian Arab Republic) reiterated the statement made by his delegation in the General Assembly on the subject of the revitalization of the role of the United Nations, and expressed support for the idea of reform. The Secretariat should provide written clarifications on the questions that had been raised. In particular, he wondered whether the workload of the Fifth Committee was expected to increase owing to the fact that it would have to study the strategic framework every two years instead of every four years, as was currently the case, whether the proposed process would be more economical than the current one, and whether it would include the same elements as those currently in the medium-term plan.

60. The distribution of certain official documents in just one language version was unacceptable, and in contravention of numerous resolutions of the General Assembly.

61. **Mr. Ádány** (Hungary) associated himself with the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union and expressed full support for the reforms proposed by the Secretary-General.

62. **Mr. Sigtryggsson** (Iceland) endorsed the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union, and expressed support for the reforms proposed by the Secretary-General. He agreed with the representative of Norway that it was important to maintain momentum in adopting the reforms.

63. **Mr. Kendall** (Argentina) endorsed the statement made by the representative of Peru on behalf of the Rio Group. The fact that the reforms proposed were relatively modest in scope was all the more reason to forge ahead as quickly as possible, especially in the light of the time constraints the Committee faced.

64. **Ms. Onisii** (Romania) fully associated herself with the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union and expressed support for the Secretary-General's proposal.

65. **Mr. Getachew** (Ethiopia) agreed that it was important to maintain the momentum for the adoption of the reform. He assured the Committee that the African Group had no intention of delaying its adoption by the General Assembly.

66. **Mr. Kramer** (Canada) said that the reason the proposals submitted by the Secretary-General were under consideration was not related to their modest scope; it was rather because they were useful, insofar as they would make the programme and budget cycle more responsive, substantial, flexible and accessible to Member States. The African Group had, in its statement, set out principles that deserved support. The Organization did indeed require a plan that would make it possible to establish realistic objectives capable of ensuring the realization of goals, and the role of the Member States in that process could not be overemphasized. The plan should continue to constitute the principle policy directive.

67. **Ms. Udo** (Nigeria) associated herself with the statement made by the representative of Botswana on behalf of the African Group and expressed full support for the reforms proposed by the Secretary-General.

68. **The Chairman** said that the current formal meeting had been convened at the request of the African Group. While he had not proposed that consideration of the agenda item should be postponed,

a proposal along those lines had been made by a Member State.

69. **Mr. Sach** (Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that when the Advisory Committee had considered the mock-ups that had been prepared by the Secretariat at the request of the Fifth Committee (A/58/600), it had expected more detailed information. Some of the information that the Advisory Committee had considered lacking had been provided to the Committee during informal consultations but for reasons of brevity had been excluded from the note by the Secretary-General.

70. The first point raised by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 6 of its report (A/58/610) addressed the timing of the consideration of the biennial programme plan and the budget outline. Both elements, the plan and the outline, would be parts of the strategic framework. Part 1, the biennial programme plan, would be considered by the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) in May or June of each off-budget year and approved by the General Assembly in the same year. The current practice would thus be continued, but it would be carried out on a two-year cycle instead of the current four-year cycle. Part 2, the budget outline, would be issued in the off-budget year after completion of the review of the biennial programme plan by CPC, so that the Secretary-General would have the benefit of input from CPC on programme priorities. As recommended by the Advisory Committee, the outline would follow the plan.

71. In paragraph 7 of its report, the Advisory Committee cast doubt on whether the biennial programme plan would be shorter or more strategic than the current medium-term plan. The current cycle from initiation to completion of programmes would be reduced from seven to five years. The plan's strategic value resided in its context, not necessarily its content. The biennial programme plan would be part of an overall framework related to the allocation of resources. There would be a linkage between the strategic framework, part 1 and part 2, which would all come together at the General Assembly session during off-budget years.

72. In paragraph 8, the Advisory Committee asked the Secretary-General to clarify how the medium-term plan could be made an instrument of policy rather than a listing of activities. In the current medium-term plan, some improvements had been made in that regard, as a clearer articulation of objectives, expected accomplishments, indicators of achievement and external factors had been included. Specific activities and outputs as such were not intended to be a feature of the strategic plan. At the time of the preparation of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005, the General Assembly had not yet adopted the process of results-based budgeting. The period from 2006 forward would therefore be the first in which results-based budgeting could be fully implemented with a focus on impact, objectives and achievements, rather than a list of activities.

73. In paragraph 9, the Advisory Committee addressed the question of the monitoring and evaluation of programme performance. The Office of Internal Oversight Services had indicated, at least in informal meetings, that a modified programme performance report would be prepared in early 2004 for consideration by CPC, and that it would take up the framework utilized in the current biennium for the results-based approach. It would integrate financial information with programmatic information so as to mould together the resource and programme considerations that were so important to ensuring appropriate monitoring and evaluation improvements. The current arrangements, which basically amounted to output counting and ignored impact measurement, had severe limitations.

74. Lastly, in paragraph 10, the Advisory Committee stated that it was not clear what level of detail on outputs and resource requirements would be made available to Member States in the budget fascicles. There would be no change in the level of detail on resource requirements in budget documents. As for outputs, the Advisory Committee had for two straight bienniums pointed to the weaknesses in the presentation of outputs, indicating, for example, that there was no consistent standard for their formulation and presentation and calling for a clearer demonstration of the extent to which such outputs helped to achieve the objectives and expected accomplishments of each subprogramme. The Secretary-General's proposals indicated that a more relevant, tabular presentation would be adopted in the future.

75. Written material had been distributed in the informal consultations in response to the concerns expressed by the Advisory Committee. As for the

workload of the Fifth Committee, the proposed reform would not impose an additional burden. The Committee already reviewed either a plan or a revision to a plan every two years, and it reviewed a budget outline every two years. Because the plan would be received with detailed recommendations from CPC, the Fifth Committee would be relieved of a good deal of drafting work.

76. **Ms. Goicochea** (Cuba) asked the Secretariat to make available in writing the clarifications given by Mr. Sach.

77. **Mr. Jonah** (Sierra Leone) said that the African Group had no intention of delaying consideration of the agenda item, but had called for a postponement so as to allow it to deliberate and give its considered opinion on the matter.

78. **Mr. Abelian** (Secretary of the Committee) said that the documents to which the Syrian representative had referred had not been distributed upon the initiative of the Secretariat, but rather at the request of some of the Member States. The documents were draft summary records, and could not be prepared at such short notice in all languages. They had therefore been circulated in the language versions available, for information purposes only.

79. **Mr. Elji** (Syrian Arab Republic) repeated that the distribution of any document, whether an advance copy or a document prepared simply for information purposes, must comply with the resolutions of the General Assembly, in other words, it must be distributed in all the official languages. He expressed the hope that such a practice would not be repeated.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.